

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1 (Currently Amended) A gene encoding the following protein (a), (b), or (c):

(a) a protein consisting of the amino acid sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 2 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~;

(b) a protein consisting of an amino acid sequence derived from the amino acid sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 2 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~ by deletion, substitution, or addition of one or several amino acid residues and having activity of imparting salt stress tolerance to plants; or

(c) a protein consisting of an amino acid sequence derived from the amino acid sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 2 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~ by deletion, substitution, or addition of one or several amino acid residues and having UDP-glucose 4-epimerase activity.

2. (Currently Amended) A gene consisting of the following DNA (d), (e), or (f):

(d) DNA consisting of the nucleotide sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 1 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~;

(e) DNA hybridizing under stringent conditions to DNA consisting of a nucleotide sequence complementary to DNA consisting of the nucleotide sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 1 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~ and encoding a protein having activity of imparting salt stress tolerance to plants; or

(f) DNA hybridizing under stringent conditions to DNA consisting of a nucleotide sequence complementary to DNA consisting of the nucleotide sequence ~~as shown in~~ of SEQ ID NO: 1 ~~in the Sequence Listing~~ and encoding a protein having UDP-glucose 4-epimerase activity.

3. (Currently Amended) A recombinant vector comprising the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~.

4. (Currently Amended) A transgenic plant into which the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2 or the recombinant vector according to claim 3~~ has been introduced.

5. (Currently Amended) A salt stress tolerant transgenic plant into which the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2 or the recombinant vector according to claim 3~~ has been introduced.

6. (Currently Amended) The transgenic plant according to claim 4 ~~or 5~~, wherein the plant is monocotyledonous.

7. (Original) The transgenic plant according to claim 6, wherein the monocotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Gramineae*, *Liliaceae*, or *Zingiberaceae*.

8. (Original) The transgenic plant according to claim 7, wherein the plant that belongs to the family *Gramineae* is selected from the group consisting of rice, barley, wheat, maize, sugarcane, Zoysia, sorghum, Italian millet, and Japanese millet.

9. (Currently Amended) The transgenic plant according to claim 4 ~~or 5~~, wherein the plant is dicotyledonous.

10. (Original) The transgenic plant according to claim 9, wherein the dicotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Brassicaceae*, *Solanaceae*, *Leguminosae*, *Cucurbitaceae*, *Umbelliferae*, *Asteraceae*, *Malvaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, or *Salicaceae*.

11. (Currently Amended) A method for imparting salt stress tolerance to plants, wherein the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2 or the recombinant vector according to claim 3~~ is introduced into plants.

12. (Currently Amended) A selection marker for a transgenic plant comprising the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2~~.

13. (Original) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 12, wherein the plant is monocotyledonous.

14. (Original) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 13, wherein the monocotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Gramineae*, *Liliaceae*, or *Zingiberaceae*.

15. (Original) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 14, wherein the plant that belongs to the family *Gramineae* is selected from the group consisting of rice, barley, wheat, maize, sugarcane, Zoysia, sorghum, Italian millet, and Japanese millet.

16. (Original) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 12, wherein the plant is dicotyledonous.

17. (Original) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 16, wherein the dicotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Brassicaceae*, *Solanaceae*, *Leguminosae*, *Cucurbitaceae*, *Umbelliferae*, *Asteraceae*, *Malvaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, or *Salicaceae*.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for selecting a transgenic plant comprising introducing the gene according to claim 1 ~~or 2 or the recombinant vector according to claim 3~~ into a plant, culturing the plant in galactose-containing medium, and selecting the transgenic plant by employing galactose tolerance as an indicator.

19. (New) A recombinant vector comprising the gene according to claim 2.

20. (New) A transgenic plant into which the gene according to claim 2 has been introduced.

21. (New) A salt stress tolerant transgenic plant into which the gene according to claim 2 has been introduced.

22. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 20, wherein the plant is monocotyledonous.

23. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 22, wherein the monocotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Gramineae*, *Liliaceae*, or *Zingiberaceae*.

24. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 23, wherein the plant that belongs to the family *Gramineae* is selected from the group consisting of rice, barley, wheat, maize, sugarcane, Zoysia, sorghum, Italian millet, and Japanese millet.

25. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 20, wherein the plant is dicotyledonous.

26. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 25, wherein the dicotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Brassicaceae*, *Solanaceae*, *Leguminosae*, *Cucurbitaceae*, *Umbelliferae*, *Asteraceae*, *Malvaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, or *Salicaceae*.

27. (New) A method for imparting salt stress tolerance to plants, wherein the gene according to claim 2 is introduced into plants.

28. (New) A selection marker for a transgenic plant comprising the gene according to claim 2.

29. (New) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 28, wherein the plant is monocotyledonous.

30. (New) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 29, wherein the monocotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Gramineae*, *Liliaceae*, or *Zingiberaceae*.

31. (New) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 30, wherein the plant that belongs to the family *Gramineae* is selected from the group consisting of rice, barley, wheat, maize, sugarcane, *Zoysia*, sorghum, Italian millet, and Japanese millet.

32. (New) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 28, wherein the plant is dicotyledonous.

33. (New) The selection marker for a transgenic plant according to claim 32, wherein the dicotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Brassicaceae*, *Solanaceae*, *Leguminosae*, *Cucurbitaceae*, *Umbelliferae*, *Asteraceae*, *Malvaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, or *Salicaceae*.

34. (New) A method for selecting a transgenic plant comprising introducing the gene according to claim 2 into a plant, culturing the plant in galactose-containing medium, and selecting the transgenic plant by employing galactose tolerance as an indicator.

35. (New) A transgenic plant into which the recombinant vector according to claim 3 has been introduced.

36. (New) A salt stress tolerant transgenic plant into which the recombinant vector according to claim 3 has been introduced.

37. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 35, wherein the plant is monocotyledonous.

38. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 37, wherein the monocotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Gramineae*, *Liliaceae*, or *Zingiberaceae*.

39. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 38, wherein the plant that belongs to the family *Gramineae* is selected from the group consisting of rice, barley, wheat, maize, sugarcane, *Zoysia*, sorghum, Italian millet, and Japanese millet.

40. (New) The transgenic plant according to 35, wherein the plant is dicotyledonous.

41. (New) The transgenic plant according to claim 40, wherein the dicotyledonous plant belongs to the family *Brassicaceae*, *Solanaceae*, *Leguminosae*, *Cucurbitaceae*, *Umbelliferae*, *Asteraceae*, *Malvaceae*, *Chenopodiaceae*, *Myrtaceae*, or *Salicaceae*.

42. (New) A method for imparting salt stress tolerance to plants, wherein the recombinant vector according to claim 3 is introduced into plants.

43. (New) A method for selecting a transgenic plant comprising introducing the recombinant vector according to claim 3 into a plant, culturing the plant in galactose-containing medium, and selecting the transgenic plant by employing galactose tolerance as an indicator.